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THE UNEXPLORED MOUNTAINS OF NORTH AMERICA

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American mountaineering has had an interesting past and promises to have a brilliant future. Rock climbs, snow peaks, volcanoes, mountains rising from the ocean and from the desert—they are all here, like the bright seraphim in endless row.

THE TORNGATS OF LABRADOR

While most of the high mountains of North America are in the West there is one wild group in the East, the Torngat Range, in northern Labrador, which has the distinction of being one of the oldest mountain chains in America. The Eskimo word *torngat*, meaning “bad spirits”, is justified. “A single view of the bare, forbidding, riven, and jagged cliffs of the saw-tooth ridges and alpine horns, whether seen in the interior or springing their thousands of feet from salt water in the fjords, leaves no wonder at the name,” says Grenfell.¹ The highest part of the range, rising directly from the sea in latitude 59° N., is believed to be over 7,000 feet. Professor A. P. Coleman, former president of the Alpine Club of Canada, has done a little pioneer climbing there, attaining summits of over 5,000 feet,² but the range is practically unknown to mountaineers. There are many small living glaciers at the cirque heads of the highest valleys.

HIGH PEAKS IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES

Probably most of the mountains over 10,000 feet in the United States—and they are numerous—have been climbed at least once, though many are far from accessible. The surveyors of the U. S. Geological Survey go almost everywhere, without making much ado about it, either. Mining prospectors are another hardy race that engage largely in mountain exploration, though for obvious reasons they do not often leave any printed record of their work.

The culminating heights of California, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Arizona, and perhaps Idaho and New Mexico, are climbed every summer. There is, for instance, a saddle trail from Flagstaff nearly to the top of San Francisco Peak, the highest in Arizona. But the highest peaks of Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada, the first nearly 13,000 feet, the others more than that, are hardly known by name outside their respective states.

¹ W. T. Grenfell and others: *Labrador: The Country and the People*, New York, 1913, p. 100.

² A. P. Coleman: *Mt. Tetragona*, *Canadian Alpine Journ.*, Vol. 7, 1916, pp. 5-11; *id.*: *Two Climbs in the Torngats*, *ibid.*, Vol. 8, 1917, pp. 34-42. Cf. *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 4, 1917, p. 58.

Montana's highest mountain, Granite Peak (12,847 feet), in the southern part of the state northeast of the Yellowstone National Park, is in a region that has not yet been mapped, though preliminary surveys have been made. The nearest stations would seem to be Columbus or Big Timber on the main line of the Northern Pacific Railway. Northwest of the latter place is an isolated group of saw-toothed peaks, bearing the singular name of the Crazy Mountains.³ Rising 7,000 feet above the railway (11,000 feet above sea level) they form a striking picture seen from the plains.

Speaking of strange names recalls the manner in which the Siskiyou Mountains in northern California and southern Oregon received their baptism. Some French-Canadian trappers from the Hudson's Bay Company post on the Columbia River had strayed down within sight of the northern end of this range. Their ford over the river they named "Six Cailloux" (six stones) and from that the settlers named the mountains, making a name that looks as though it were of Indian origin. "Wasatch" (Osage) and "Ozark" (Aux Arcs) are similar cases of perverted French names.

Gannett Peak (13,785 feet), in the Wind River Range, is the highest summit in Wyoming. It is not a difficult peak but is rather a long way from railroads—Lander, at the end of the Lander branch of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway, being the nearest point.

Hyndman Peak (12,078 feet), the highest in Idaho, is in the Sawtooth National Forest about twenty miles northeast of Hailey Hot Springs, which is on the Wood River branch of the Oregon Short Line Railroad. The next peak to the northwest bears the name of the Devil's Bedstead. These are in a mining and sheep-grazing region. Fifty to a hundred miles farther north are the Salmon River Mountains, with big game, far from all railroads.

THE WASATCH AND UINTAH RANGES

Although Utah has been more thoroughly mapped by the U. S. Geological Survey than any other of the far western states, most of its mountains, except those of the Wasatch Range, which culminates at 11,900 feet, are inaccessible and seldom climbed. The Uintah Range in the northeastern part of the state, remarkable for running east and west, has the highest peaks—King's Peak (13,498 feet), Emmons Peak (13,428 feet), and Gilbert Peak (13,422 feet). All three of the men, Clarence King, Samuel F. Emmons, and G. K. Gilbert, whose names are thus perpetuated, were prominent in the early government surveying expeditions. Several towns, Roosevelt among others, have sprung up in recent years in the Uintah basin south of the range, and from some one of these, perhaps Vernal, where the supervisor of the Ashley National Forest has his head-

³ M. R. Campbell and others: *Guidebook of the Western United States, Part A, The Northern Pacific Route*, U. S. Geol. Survey Bull. 611, Washington, D. C., 1915; reference on p. 86.

quarters, it would be necessary to outfit with pack train. The forest supervisor of the region is generally the best man from whom to obtain information of this sort. Roosevelt and Vernal are reached by automobile stage from Helper on the main line of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, or from Mack on a branch of the same road. From the north the range can be reached from Carter in southern Wyoming on the Union Pacific Railroad. It is evidently an interesting range, for F. V. Hayden, chief of the Geological Survey many years ago, wrote most enthusiastically about it: "In the artistic sense no range that I have seen on this continent can compare with it in beauty."

MOUNTAINS OF THE DESERT REGION

The La Sal Mountains near the Colorado boundary also reach elevations of 13,000 feet. The other mountains of Utah, those of Nevada and Arizona, as well as those in the southern and western part of New Mexico and in southern California, rise from the desert. They do not attract many climbers, though John Muir, who seems to have gone almost everywhere, had a good time climbing in Nevada.

In southern Utah the Abajo and Henry Mountains both have peaks over 11,000 feet, and near the Arizona border is the lonely and fascinating Navajo Peak (10,416 feet), four miles from which, in one of the most inaccessible parts of the United States, two hundred miles from a railroad, was discovered in 1909 the great Rainbow Natural Bridge.

Wheeler Peak (13,058 feet) was long supposed to be the highest in Nevada. It is in the Snake Range in the eastern part of the state—a part that has not yet been mapped. It commemorates Major George M. Wheeler, who, as a member of the Corps of Engineers of the United States Army, was engaged in surveying in the state from 1871 to 1879.

There are many peaks over 10,000 feet scattered over the state, all rising from the desert. Recently Boundary Peak, in the northern part of the White Mountains close to the California line, has been found to be slightly higher (13,145 feet) than Wheeler Peak. These are the highest of the desert mountains.

MOUNTAINS OF NEVADA AND EASTERN CALIFORNIA

The East Humboldt, or Ruby, Range, perhaps the most rugged mountain mass in Nevada, is seen from the trains of the Overland Route beyond the town of Wells, sixty or seventy miles west of the Utah line.⁴ A number of the peaks are from 11,000 to 12,000 feet, the railroad here being just about a mile above sea level. The crest of the range is included in the Humboldt National Forest.

The greater part of the White Mountains just referred to lies in Inyo County, California. The range, in which some mining has been done, is

⁴ W. T. Lee and others: *Guidebook of the Western United States, Part B, The Overland Route*, U. S. Geol. Survey Bull. 612, Washington, D. C., 1915; reference on p. 163.

included in the Inyo National Forest. It is seen from the eastern heights of the Yosemite National Park. The Keeler branch of the Southern Pacific Railroad runs through Owens Valley, which separates this range from the Sierra Nevada, and a toll road to Deep Spring Lake crosses the southern end of the range at a height of over 7,000 feet. The Inyo Mountains, also over 11,000 feet, continue the range to the south to Owens Lake, an alkaline lake 3,569 feet above the sea.

The Panamint Mountains, another range in eastern California, southeast of the White Mountains, rise west and south above Death Valley, the lowest point of which is 280 feet below sea level, the lowest part of the United States. Telescope Peak (11,045 feet), its highest point, is about seventy-five miles from Mt. Whitney, the highest mountain in the United States, and a little south of east from it.

MOUNTAINS OF ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO

The White Mountains of Arizona, mainly in the Apache Indian Reservation, many miles from railroads, contain, according to Dillon Wallace, the largest primeval forest in the United States. They are reached by a daily stage from Holbrook to Fort Apache near the center of the reservation. This reservation, of some five thousand Indians, is 95 miles north and south and 70 miles east and west. Holbrook and Fort Apache are about 5,000 feet above sea level, and the highest point of the range, Thomas Peak, is 11,496 feet. Mr. Wallace, who made a circuit of this peak, says its scenery is "unsurpassed for variety and tone,"⁵ to say nothing of its being a sportsman's Eden. An Apache superstition prevents the Indians from catching trout or shooting wild turkey. Deer, bears, mountain lions, and wildcats are numerous, and there are still mountain sheep.

There is a Sierra Blanca (White Mountain) in New Mexico, which state has also a Black Range with at least two peaks over 10,000 feet. One of these, Yellowjacket Peak, carries the color scheme a little further, though it was probably named after an exciting combat with a familiar winged insect—a combat in which firearms were useless.

PEAKS OF THE SIERRA NEVADA

In 1907, when Joseph N. Le Conte wrote "The High Sierra of California," the first of the American Alpine Club's publications—a monograph that every lover of these mountains ought to possess—he reminded us that there were still virgin peaks in the Sierra Nevada. A year or two afterward Professor Le Conte and his friend, James S. Hutchinson, made the first ascent of one of these, Mt. Abbott (13,700 feet), after finding it inaccessible from two sides; but, so far as the writer knows, only one of the Evolution Group, a fine group 13,000 feet high, has ever been ascended. The same is true of the Palisade Group, which

⁵ Dillon Wallace: *Saddle and Camp in the Rockies*, New York, 1911, p. 42.

is still higher (13,700 to 14,200 feet), and of the Kaweah Peaks. The North Palisade and Humphreys Peaks (each over 14,000 feet) have been ascended but once, by Le Conte and Hutchinson. "The Palisades," says Professor Le Conte, "furnish the very finest field in the Sierra for the mountain climber. . . . The eastern side is a sheer drop of several thousand feet, and at the base of the cliff are several residual glaciers."⁶

THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

Mountaineers have been busy making first ascents in the Canadian Rockies since the opening of the first transcontinental railroad across Canada and have already climbed the peaks nearest the two newer railroads in the region farther north; but the range is fifteen hundred miles long, and there is plenty of new work for the climber with a pack train.⁷ What is probably the next to the highest of the Canadian Rockies, Mt. Sir Alexander (12,500 feet), was not attempted, approached, or even named until 1914, although Mr. R. W. Jones, when surveying for possible passes for the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, had seen it ten years before; but he was looking for low passes, not high mountains, and so said nothing about it. Mr. S. Prescott Fay, of Boston, had seen it from a distance in 1912 and was the first to map and photograph it two years later. The same summer that Mr. Fay and his friend, Charles R. Cross, Jr., were exploring this big mountain, Miss Mary L. Jobe, of New York, made an attempt to climb it with Donald Phillips.⁸ Mr. Fay found another fine peak, Mt. Ida, still farther north.

The main chain of the Rockies in the southern part of Canada averages sixty miles in breadth, running from southeast to northwest. On the southwest side is a long, deep trough occupied successively by the Kootenay, the Columbia, the Canoe, the Fraser, the Parsnip, and the Finlay Rivers of the Peace River system, and the Kachika of the Liard River system. To the west of this are more mountains, older than and different from the Rockies.

Near the United States are the Purcell and Selkirk Ranges, the latter conceded to be one of the most interesting ranges in the world. It is some four hundred miles long and, while three fine mountaineering books—W. S. Green's "Among the Selkirk Glaciers" (1890), A. O. Wheeler's "The Selkirk Range" (1905), and Howard Palmer's "Mountaineering and Exploration in the Selkirks" (1914)—are devoted exclusively to it, it still has many peaks awaiting the conqueror.

⁶ J. N. Le Conte: *The High Sierra of California* (Alpina Americana No. 1), American Alpine Club, Philadelphia, 1907, p. 10.

⁷ C. E. Fay: Recent Mountaineering in the Canadian Alps, *Geogr. Rev.*, Vol. 2, 1916, pp. 1-18.

⁸ See S. P. Fay: *The Canadian Rockies Between the Yellowhead Pass and the Peace River*, *Appalachia*, Vol. 13, 1913-15, pp. 238-257; Mary L. Jobe: *Mt. Kitchi: A New Peak in the Canadian Rockies*, *Bull. Amer. Geogr. Soc.*, Vol. 47, 1915, pp. 481-497, with colored map, 1:300,000. For a fine picture of Mt. Sir Alexander see Mary L. Jobe: *A Winter Journey Through the Canadian Rockies, from Mt. Robson to Mt. Sir Alexander*, *Appalachia*, Vol. 14, 1916-19, pp. 223-233.

The highest peak, Mt. Sir Sandford (11,590 feet), has been climbed only once, by Mr. Palmer and his friend, E. W. D. Holway, with two Swiss guides in June, 1912.

THE CARIBOO RANGE

Still farther west is the lower Gold Range, or Columbia Range, as it has been called in recent years. This is not important; but its northern continuation, the Cariboo Range, is one of the most interesting fields for the mountaineer. The surveyors for the first Canadian transcontinental railway explored most of its passes, but their work was soon forgotten, and it was not until 1916 that Professor Holway and Doctor Gilmour made a beginning with ice axe and rope.

In his account of "The Canadian Rockies North of Mt. Robson" J. Norman Collie says of the Cariboo Range: "My first view of them from a peak we climbed in 1910 in the Moose Valley astonished me. Mumm had seen them in 1909 They are bigger and finer than the Selkirk Range as seen from the Rocky Mountains near Laggan. Two peaks that I have seen many times are especially fine, one a snow peak, and the other much sharper and with a good deal of rock on it. There is also a great glacier coming from the middle of the range eastwards. In shape these Cariboo Mountains are more rugged, wild, and beautiful than those in the Rockies. This one would expect, for they are made of the harder crystalline rocks and not of limestone . . . the Cariboo Mountains are no minor group, but will yield to their explorers some of the finest peaks, some of the grandest scenery, and some of the most interesting geological information to be obtained in Western Canada."⁹

THE COAST RANGE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

West of the Gold and Cariboo Ranges is the Coast Range of British Columbia, continuing up into the Yukon Territory and the panhandle of Alaska. It is nearly a thousand miles long altogether. The mountains, although not many of them are over 9,000 feet, rise from sea level, are in a region of much precipitation, and have many fine glaciers, some of them coming down to the sea. It is a magnificent chain, as everyone who has threaded the inland channel from Vancouver to Skagway knows, a region of beautiful fiords and scenic wonders.

The range averages a hundred miles in width, dropping off on the east to an uneven plateau, about 3,500 feet above the sea. It is practically untouched by mountaineers. The British Columbia Mountaineering Club of the city of Vancouver is doing good work in exploring the southern end and has opened up some wonderful scenes. John Muir's book, "Travels in Alaska," has a glowing account of an ascent he made in 1879 from

⁹ J. N. Collie: *The Canadian Rockies North of Mt. Robson*, *Appalachia*, Vol. 12, 1909-12, pp. 339-349; reference on p. 346.

Glenora on the Stikine River (spelled "Stickeen" by Muir), in British Columbia, about one hundred miles north of Wrangell. Glenora Peak he estimated to be about 7,000 feet in altitude, and of the view he says: "I never before had seen so richly sculptured a range or so many awe-inspiring inaccessible mountains crowded together" . . . "more than three hundred miles of closely packed peaks of the great Coast Range . . . their naked tops and dividing ridges dark in color, their sides and canyons, gorges, and valleys loaded with glaciers and snow. From this standpoint I counted upwards of two hundred glaciers . . . Alps rise beyond alps as far as the eye can reach . . . Everywhere the peaks seem comparatively slender and closely packed, as if Nature had here been trying to see how many noble, well-dressed mountains could be crowded into one grand range."¹⁰

The highest mountains of Vancouver Island, over 7,000 feet, in a region of beautiful lakes, have been set aside in recent years by the government as Strathcona Park. The chain of which these are a part extends through practically the whole of the island, which is 290 miles long. It is a sub-merged range entirely surrounded by deep water, but even so it makes a magnificent showing.¹¹

MT. LOGAN

The highest mountain in Canada is not in the Rockies but in Yukon Territory near Alaska. It was discovered in 1890 by Israel C. Russell in his first attempt on Mt. St. Elias. He says: "The clouds' parting toward the northeast revealed several giant peaks not before seen, some of which seem to rival in height St. Elias itself. One stranger, rising in three white domes far above the clouds, was especially magnificent. As this was probably the first time its summit was ever seen, we took the liberty of giving it a name. It will appear on our maps as 'Mt. Logan,' in honor of Sir William E. Logan, founder and long director of the Geological Survey of Canada."¹² The height he estimated at 19,500 feet, and now, thirty years later, it is still unclimbed.

THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS NEAR THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

Elihu Stewart, formerly Superintendent of Forestry for Canada, in his book "Down the Mackenzie and Up the Yukon in 1906," tells of going from Fort McPherson (the most northern of the Hudson's Bay Company's posts, near the delta of the Mackenzie in latitude 67°) down Stony Creek (La Pierre) to the Rocky Mountains, which he crossed some 60 miles north of the Arctic Circle at a height of 2,600 feet, the mountains rising 2,000 to 3,000 feet higher still. Of the journey down the Pacific side in late July he wrote: "We passed over some snow on the hillsides, but with-

¹⁰ John Muir: *Travels in Alaska*, Boston and New York, 1915, pp. 93-94.

¹¹ A number of articles on Strathcona Park are to be found in the *Canadian Alpine Journal*, Vol. 5, 1913.

¹² I. C. Russell: An Expedition to Mt. St. Elias, Alaska, *Natl. Geogr. Mag.*, Vol. 3, 1891, pp. 53-200; reference on p. 141.

cut the least difficulty, as it was almost as hard as ice The mountain scenery here was very beautiful, though the peaks are not so high as further south No large glaciers are to be seen in this region, but considerable snow remains the year round on some of the peaks."¹³ He was five days in covering the eighty miles from Fort McPherson to Bell River, a tributary of the Porcupine which flows into the Yukon at Fort Yukon.

THE ALASKAN ROCKIES

When the Rocky Mountains and the Coast Range, after their journey of hundreds of miles in a northwesterly direction, reach the international boundary they turn to the west and later to the southwest across Alaska in two crescents, from two hundred to three hundred miles apart, the great mesa-like plain of the Yukon River and its tributaries separating the two systems which have marched along so majestically together from the southland.

Of the extreme north Vilhjálmur Stefánsson, in "My Life With the Eskimo," says: "The low, coastal plain of northern Alaska is triangular in shape, with its apex at Point Barrow, perhaps two hundred miles north from the base, which is formed by the east and west running Alaskan spur of the Rocky Mountains, which comes within a few miles of the coast in eastern Alaska at the international boundary and meets the ocean in western Alaska at Cape Lisburne. . . . Their distance from the sea is not more than six or eight miles at Demarcation Point, while their highest places are probably about 10,000 feet in elevation and lie southward from Flaxman and Barter Islands, where they contain a few small glaciers."¹⁴

The Arctic Range is sometimes called the British Mountains. Thomas Riggs, Jr., engineer to the Alaska Boundary Commission, thinks the higher summits are only about 7,000 feet high and says they are bare of snow in summer, as well as barren of timber.¹⁵ This continuation of the Rocky Mountains in Alaska has various names, "Endicott" being applied to the central part of it and "Baird," "Waring," and "DeLong" farther west. The Davidson Range (south of the Arctic Range), discovered in the winter of 1890 by J. H. Turner, of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, while surveying the international boundary, was named after George Davidson (1825-1911), the first United States government surveyor to explore the Alaska mountains (1867). The mountains of this range reach a height of 5,000 to 6,000 feet and extend many miles both east and west of the boundary. They are densely wooded with pine trees, some of which attain a height of forty to fifty feet. The journey of the explorers from their camp, about one hundred and twenty-five miles north to the Arctic Ocean, was made in March, the thermometer sometimes reaching 50° below zero.¹⁶

¹³ Elihu Stewart: *Down the Mackenzie and Up the Yukon* in 1906. London and New York, 1913. p. 124.

¹⁴ Vilhjálmur Stefánsson: *My Life with the Eskimo*, New York, 1913, pp. 65, 66.

¹⁵ Thomas Riggs, Jr.: *Surveying the 141st Meridian*, *Natl. Geogr. Mag.*, Vol. 23, 1908, pp. 685-713.

¹⁶ John Bonner: *Alaskan Exploration in 1891*, *Californian Illust. Mag.*, Vol. 1, 1892, pp. 243-254.

MT. MCKINLEY AND MT. FORAKER

Alaska has the highest mountain on the continent—Mt. McKinley, Tennali, or Denali, as you prefer (20,300 feet or 20,700 feet)—the tallest snow mountain in the world, for the perpetual snow line here is not far from 2,000 feet above sea level. Since 1903, when first attempted, it has been the scene of considerable activity, and four books have been devoted entirely to it. The near-by Mt. Foraker, or Denali's Wife, rising 17,000 feet above the sea, still stands an "imperial votaress . . . in maiden meditation, fancy-free."

The view of these two great mountains, seen from Lake Minchumina only 1,500 feet above sea level, is stupendous in its majesty, says Archdeacon Stuck.¹⁷ May the government railroad be soon completed, so that more of us may glimpse these two great mountains!

OTHER ALASKAN PEAKS

Of the peaks of the magnificent range rising for nearly three hundred miles along the ocean Mt. St. Elias (18,024 feet) is the only one that has been climbed. Mt. Logan, the highest of the range (19,500 feet), in reality stands back from the rest and is just over the border in Canadian territory; but there are other dazzling peaks (the snow line is from 3,000 to 4,000 feet above the sea) to tempt the ambitious—Mt. Vancouver (15,676 feet), Mt. Hubbard (14,950 feet), Mt. Cook (13,755 feet), all near to St. Elias, and Mt. Fairweather (15,399 feet), Mt. Crillon (12,727 feet), and Mt. La Pérouse (10,756 feet), farther south. West of Mt. St. Elias the range divides, the lower Chugach Range (culminating in Mt. Gilbert, 10,194 feet) following the coast around Prince William Sound to the Kenai Peninsula, the other, the Wrangell Range, running northwest to the Copper River, culminating in Mt. Sanford (16,208 feet). Mt. Blackburn, the second in height (16,140 feet), was conquered by Miss Dora Keen¹⁸ (now Mrs. Handy) in May, 1912. Mt. Wrangell, the only active volcano in the range, was climbed by Robert Dunn in July, 1908. There are five or six other peaks that rise over 10,000 feet.

The great Alaska Range, of which Mt. McKinley is the culminating point, extends from the Copper River in a great broad crescent westward for five hundred miles or more, well back from the coast. It has many high peaks, though none of them approach McKinley and Foraker.

The surveyors of the boundary commission that has recently marked out the line running north six hundred miles from Mt. St. Elias to the Arctic Ocean found, eighty or ninety miles north of St. Elias, a lonely and majestic snow peak, Mt. Natazhat (13,480 feet), crowning the top of an east-and-west range of the same name. This peak was climbed in June,

¹⁷ Hudson Stuck: *Ten Thousand Miles with a Dog Sled*, New York, 1914; *id.*: *The Ascent of Mount Denali (Mt. McKinley)*, New York, 1914.

¹⁸ See Dora Keen: *First Up Mt. Blackburn*, *World's Work*, Vol. 27, 1913, pp. 80-101.

1913, by H. F. J. Lambart and three companions, though it did not yield upon the first attempt nor was it in an exactly docile mood when it was finally conquered.¹⁹

The Aleutian Range, on the Alaska Peninsula and the Aleutian Islands, forms a long line of active volcanoes, the highest of them being Mt. Spurr (11,069 feet), Mt. Redoubt (10,198 feet), and Iliamna (10,017 feet).²⁰

With all of these glorious heights before him the mountaineer may well pray for a long and vigorous life.

¹⁹ See H. F. J. Lambart: The Ascent of Mt. Natazhat (13,480 feet) in Alaska (1913), *Canadian Alpine Journ.*, Vol. 6, 1914-15, pp. 1-10.

²⁰ On the mountains in the southern half of Alaska see especially the admirable monograph by Alfred H. Brooks: *Mountain Exploration in Alaska* (Alpina Americana No. 3), American Alpine Club, Philadelphia, 1914.